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STRATEGIC MOBILITY: 1965-1980

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT
(Essay)

✓ Strategic Mobility: 1965-1980

by

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22 April 1966

SUMMARY

During the past five years the Department of Defense has placed a disproportionate emphasis on the qualitative and quantitative improvement of the national military strategic airlift capability. No thoroughgoing attempt has been made to develop a modern sealift capability to complement the strategic aircraft being procured under the comprehensive airlift modernization program initiated in 1961. As a consequence, a progressive lack of balance is emerging between the quality of the strategic airlift capacity and that of the strategic sealift fleet.

To attain balance in our strategic mobility posture during the 1965-1980 period, we should implement a long range MSTS modernization program to replace the fractional effort presently programmed. In addition, a Presidential Commission should be appointed to make appropriate recommendations with respect to improving the capability of the US Merchant Marine to perform its dual mission of carrying US commercial cargoes and serving as an auxiliary to the MSTS fleet.

If a balanced and flexible strategic mobility attitude is to be achieved, there is a requirement for an organizational structure that will plan and execute strategic deployments effectively, provide a mechanism for furnishing timely and pertinent information on strategic mobility matters to national decision-makers, and produce a competent and fulltime spokesman to "sell" appropriate strategic mobility programs to the executive and legislative branches of the government.

To date, no demonstrable operational or planning defects in the existing organization have been uncovered which would justify consequential changes in the present organizational groupings. Future stresses and strains placed upon the organization for strategic mobility may disclose major deficiencies that will make it imperative that a mechanism be created for more centralized control over the strategic lift capability.

In the future we must gear our efforts to the pursuance of further qualitative and quantitative improvements, to the attainment of balance and flexibility in the strategic lift inventory, and to the continual shaping of a responsive and creative organization for strategic mobility.

During an appearance before the House Armed Services Committee in early 1961, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David M. Shoup, appraised the adequacy of the existing U.S. strategic airlift and sealift capacity in this fashion: "Actually today, in the Marine Corps and the Army--we actually have more fight than ferry right now in the Armed Forces; and I include in the word 'ferry' airplanes and ships."¹ This pungent and perceptive analysis reflected General Shoup's concern over significant deficits in the national strategic mobility capability. With respect to airlift, both quantitative and qualitative deficiencies existed. In the sealift field, the Navy's amphibious ships, troop transports, cargo ships, and tankers were afflicted with increasing block obsolescence. These deficiencies had developed during the era of "massive retaliation" when U.S. decision-makers had assigned a relatively low priority to the maintenance of the capability to deploy sizeable air and ground forces of the CONUS-based strategic reserve to overseas crisis areas.

The Kennedy Administration assumed office armed with a new strategy--that of the "flexible response"--and with a concomitant determination to increase the national strategic mobility capability. In a special defense message which he submitted to the Congress in March 1961, President Kennedy asserted that the most

¹US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Military Posture Briefings, 1961, p. 987.

active and constant threats to the security of the Free World since 1945 had been non-nuclear wars and sublimated warfare. He announced plans to improve the capability of U.S. conventional forces to cope with these threats. Among the specific measures recommended by the President and approved by the Congress in 1961 were: (1) an acceleration and increase in the procurement of airlift aircraft already in production--the C-130 and the C-135, (2) the development and procurement of the C-141 jet transport, and (3) the construction of new ships to increase the speed and capacity of the amphibious lift provided the Marine Corps by the Navy. The defense budgets for the ensuing four years continued to place emphasis on the improvement of strategic airlift and amphibious shipping capabilities.

Efforts in the strategic mobility area were not confined to the procurement of new aircraft and ships. Particular attention was paid to the calculation of transportation requirements to support contingency plans for non-nuclear warfare situations. Strategic mobility exercises were conducted to test the validity of movement plans and to demonstrate the ability of the United States to project elements of its military power in support of its global collective security commitments. The most spectacular of these exercises was "Big Lift," during which the personnel of an armored division were deployed by strategic airlift from Texas to Germany in less than three days. In a speech prepared for delivery in Dallas on the day of his assassination, President Kennedy cited

"Big Lift" as evidence that "this nation is prepared as never before to move substantial numbers of men in surprisingly little time to advanced positions anywhere in the world."² Two years later Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara announced that U.S. airlift capabilities had doubled since 1961. By 1968, he predicted, these capabilities would be five times greater than they were when he took office in 1961.³

Today we obviously possess a considerably enhanced "ferry" capacity. Clearly, we must continue to improve upon this capability in the years ahead. It is a basic premise of this paper that our strategic mobility capability will constitute a vital component of the U.S. national defense posture during the next 15 years. The primary threat to the peace and stability of the international order will continue to lie in the ability and resolve of the major Communist nations to inspire, support, and exploit covert and overt low-level aggression against the nation-states of the Free World. The United States will be called upon to help counter this threat by providing assistance to its allies in the form of advice, materiel, and combat support or combat forces.

To muster its resources and to deploy its forces as required, the United States must choose between two broad strategies. We

²John F. Kennedy, as quoted by William W. Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, p. 316.

³"Journal Memo," The Journal of the Armed Forces, Vol. 103, 18 Sep. 1965, p. 4.

can continue to pursue our present strategy of forward deployments, with its heavy commitment of forces to key overseas areas, its prestockage of equipment and supplies both afloat and ashore, and its upkeep of a mobile strategic reserve within the CONUS. Alternatively, we can withdraw part or all of our forces presently deployed and place greater reliance on the rapid deployment of the CONUS strategic reserve to deal with the Communist threats as they develop. Regardless of the nature of the strategic concepts which evolve, strategic mobility will be a matter of continuing concern to U.S. planners and operators as they devise and implement our national strategy in the 1960's and 1970's.

Two separate but related aspects of the U.S. strategic mobility posture will be considered in what follows: the requirement for an appropriate mix of strategic airlift and sealift to support future contingency operations within the low and mid-intensity warfare spectrum, and the adequacy of present organizational arrangements for the development and promotion of balanced strategic mobility programs and for the planning and execution of strategic mobility operations.

A STRATEGIC AIRLIFT AND SEALIFT MIX

The Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage (JCS Pub. 1) defines mobility as: "A quality or capability of military forces which permits them to move from place to place while

retaining the ability to fulfill their primary mission."⁴ Strategic mobility involves, essentially, the inter-theater deployment of these forces by airlift or sealift or by a combination of both means. A movement which involves long distances within a theater of operations may also be classified as a strategic deployment. The recent lift of elements of the 25th Infantry Division from Hawaii to South Vietnam is a prime example of such a deployment.

The experience of the past two decades has demonstrated that the aircraft and the ship are partners, not rivals, in the field of strategic mobility. The extent to which they complement each other can be seen vividly when it is recognized that the advantages of one mode of transportation offset the disadvantages of the other:

1. An aircraft can be loaded and unloaded in a relatively quick and easy manner; the loading and unloading of a ship, particularly of a cargo vessel, can be a time-consuming, and often difficult process.

2. Jet transport aircraft travel at speeds which approach ten miles per minute; some ships require an hour to traverse a similar distance.

3. The tactical situation permitting, strategic airlift can deliver personnel and equipment inland, close to, or within

⁴Joint Chiefs of Staff, Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage (JCS Pub. 1), p. 94.

the combat zone. Ships must unload at the nearest port available, where their cargoes are transloaded for shipment to the combat area.

4. Both aircraft and ships are susceptible to attack by enemy aircraft, but aircraft are not vulnerable to submarine attack.

5. Strategic deployment by sea is not dependent upon favorable weather conditions and overflight rights.

6. Ships can carry cargo whose bulk or weight preclude its movement by air.

7. Ships can move a greater variety of items longer distances at less expense than aircraft.

An optimum mix of strategic airlift and sealift to meet future contingencies cannot be determined with precision. The variables involved are many, and their interrelationships are highly complex. Among the purely military factors which apply in each crisis situation calling for strategic deployment of U.S. forces or equipment are these: considerations of time and speed, the distance to the objective area, the quantity of troops and materiel to be deployed, the usability and capacity of port and airfield facilities at both ends of the move, the availability of prepositioned stocks in the overseas area, the resupply and replacement requirements for the duration of the operation, and the concurrent demands upon the U.S. strategic lift capacity. Two strategic mobility operations illustrate the relevance of these factors. The nature of the initial phase of the commitment of U.S. units to the Dominican

Republic was such that a preponderance of airlift over sealift was employed. On the other hand, the vast bulk of the men and equipment deployed to South Vietnam have moved by sea.

The dimensions of the U.S. strategic mobility capability are set by a continuing planning and study cycle whose annual end product is the Department of Defense budget program for airlift and sealift forces. These forces include the transport aircraft of the Military Airlift Command (MAC), the troop carrier aircraft of the Tactical Air Command (TAC), the passenger ships, cargo ships, and tankers of the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS) nucleus fleet, and certain reconditioned cargo ships designated as forward floating depots. The military strategic mobility inventory also contains the long range transport aircraft of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, and, as indicated previously, the amphibious shipping of the U.S. Navy. Supplementing this military capability are the aircraft of the U.S. commercial air carriers and the ships of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

TRENDS

Several major trends are discernible in the strategic airlift and sealift programs and activities of the past five years:

1. Modernization of the strategic airlift fleet. Top priority has been given to the development, production, and procurement of long range, large payload, turbine-powered aircraft. By the early 1970's the military strategic airlift fleet of the

regular Air Force will be composed primarily of the C-141 (operational in 1965) and the C-5A (scheduled to become operational in 1969). General Howell M. Estes, Jr., Commander of MAC, recently described the dramatic increase in airlift capability which will stem from the modernization program now in progress. He estimated that, at the present time, it would take his command 30 days to transport an Army force of 21,042 troops and 34,000 tons of cargo from the United States to South Vietnam. By the end of FY 1971, MAC, using a combination of C-141's and C-5A's, will be able to move the same load in only 15 days.⁵

The decision by the Department of Defense leadership to assign the highest priority within the strategic mobility field to the modernization of strategic airlift was based principally on its determination that the existing airlift capability was more inadequate to meet contingency requirements than was the sealift fleet. The airlift modernization program was also given impetus by the DOD's adoption of the concept of "marrying-up" of airlifted personnel with equipment and supplies prepositioned in selected foreign locations.

2. Increased use of U.S. civil air carriers to supplement MAC's capability. Since 1961 MAC has applied an increasing

⁵Cecil Brownlow, "USAF Channels 75% of Airlift to Vietnam," Aviation Week and Space Technology, Vol. 84, 10 Jan. 1966, p. 36.

percentage of its capability to fulfilling specific military airlift requirements, particularly those generated by large scale strategic deployment exercises. Concurrently, the civil air carriers have handled more routine military traffic. This trend has been accentuated by the decision to commit U.S. combat and combat support units to South Vietnam. During the first six months of FY 1966, U.S. commercial airlines carried 371,684 passengers and 32,169 tons of cargo on outbound and inbound flights from the United States to Southeast Asia.⁶ These figures represent approximately 66% of the total number of passengers and approximately 30% of the total cargo tonnage airlifted to that area.

3. Modernization of amphibious shipping. To increase the deployment potential of the Marine Corps, the amphibious forces of the Navy are being furnished new ships with speeds of 20 knots and with a capability for vertical envelopment as well as over-the-beach assault. When the current modernization program is completed, sufficient modern amphibious shipping will be available to lift simultaneously the assault echelons of two Marine division/wing teams. Secretary of the Navy Paul H. Nitze has stressed the significance of a rapid amphibious deployment capability:

Increased speed is an essential factor in limited war situations which demand reduced reaction time. For example, 20 knot Pacific Fleet amphibious forces

⁶"Growing Military Airlift," The Journal of the Armed Forces, Vol. 103, 22 Jan. 1966, p. 3.

based in San Diego could reach the Middle East (via the Panama Canal) in the same time as a 12 knot force from Norfolk, and much quicker--9 days--than our old LST's from Norfolk.⁷

4. Partial modernization of the MSTS nucleus fleet. The modernization of the MSTS nucleus fleet has been limited to the roll-on/roll-off ship category. By the end of FY 1966, three of these ships, designed to load and discharge wheeled and tracked vehicles rapidly, will be operational. MSTS has also contracted to charter a fourth roll-on/roll-off ship which is to be constructed and operated by private industry.

A program was initiated in 1965 to develop a new class of Navy roll-on/roll-off ships with greater capacity and speed and lower procurement and operating costs. The Congress authorized and appropriated sufficient FY 1966 funds for the construction of two fast deployment logistics ships. Secretary of Defense McNamara described these ships as an essential complement to the national airlift capability and explained their utility:

Such a ship would be particularly useful for carrying, without disassembly, heavy wheeled and tracked vehicles as well as helicopters. Its relatively high speed would permit it to deliver cargo within the critical first 30 days, even from the United States to a distant area. We propose, however, to use these ships as forward mobile depots stationed close to potential trouble areas and in no event for carrying peacetime cargoes.⁸

⁷US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings on Military Posture and H.R. 9367, p. 7224.

⁸US Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations for 1966, p. 254.

No comparable modernization program is contemplated for the MSTS general purpose cargo ships, passenger ships, and tankers, although rehabilitation and lengthening of some of the latter ships is planned. The decision not to modernize these elements of the MSTS fleet stemmed from the judgement that the combined MSTS/Merchant Marine capabilities were generally adequate to meet present and projected military requirements. Secretary McNamara put it this way:

With respect to sealift, our studies indicate that, generally, our present ocean going cargo capability (including the large available merchant marine) is sufficient to meet wartime needs. Presently available troop sealift, while not completely adequate for every possible contingency, is not a matter of serious concern inasmuch as there appears to be a concurrent surplus of passenger airlift in every case we have examined.⁹

Another factor which influences meaningfully the nature and scope of the MSTS sealift modernization program is Congressional insistence that the MSTS fleet not duplicate the capabilities theoretically available in the U.S. Merchant Marine. New MSTS ships must be justified, in part, on the basis that they are "special purpose" ships which are military in design and function and do not compete with U.S. commercial shipping interests.

5. The deterioration of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Since the end of World War II, the Merchant Marine's posture has deteriorated

⁹US Congress, Hearings on Military Posture and H.R. 9637; op. cit., p. 7048.

to such an extent that it has required increasingly larger federal financial assistance. We are concerned here with one aspect of this deterioration: the ability of the active and reserve merchant fleets to supplement, as required, the national military sealift. There has been general agreement that the number of ships in the Merchant Marine was adequate to meet the requirements imposed by a cold or limited war crisis. It has also been recognized, however, that our merchant ships have been growing progressively obsolescent. Most of them are extremely slow by present day standards and lack modern cargo handling capabilities. Nevertheless, no comprehensive modernization program has been undertaken, allegedly because of the prohibitively high costs of U.S. ship construction and operation.

The current effort to meet the sealift requirements in support of the U.S. commitment in South Vietnam has brought to light two additional shortcomings of the Merchant Marine as presently constituted. First, there is the question of the availability of U.S. merchant shipping in a low or mid-intensity warfare situation. MSTIS officials have contended that U.S. private shipping operators have not made sufficient tonnage available to satisfy the escalating requirements in Vietnam. Representatives of the shipping lines have countered by charging that: (1) MSTIS has not developed an effective shipping requirements program to facilitate the preparation of long range plans by the shipping industry, (2) MSTIS has failed to make the most efficient use of the ships under its control, and (3) MSTIS's charter rates, in some instances, have been too low.

The availability problem centers around the question of whether the shippers can be expected to meet expanded military requirements in a non-national emergency situation while risking the loss of the commercial business to foreign competitors. The shippers' position is that the government should rely more heavily on the withdrawal of cargo ships from the Maritime Administration's National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF). To date, some 100 ships have been ordered placed in an active status at a cost of some three to four hundred thousand dollars per ship.

MSTS has, at times, resorted to the chartering of foreign shipping. During the summer and fall of 1965 the immediate needs for shipping were so pressing, and the lack of U.S.-flag ships so evident, that MSTS chartered some foreign-flag vessels to carry cargo to Vietnam. The National Maritime Union charged that this action was illegal, and instituted court proceedings against the Department of Defense. The Commander of MSTS answered the charge by declaring that under existing law MSTS could charter foreign-flag ships when American vessels were not available. The president of the union maintained that inasmuch as large numbers of ships were in the NDRF in the United States, MSTS had violated the spirit of the law which requires that all vital defense cargoes moved by sea be carried in American merchant ships.¹⁰

¹⁰Don Bevona, "US Admits Ship Shortage," New York Herald Tribune, 1 Nov. 1965, p. 30.

A final deficiency in the Merchant Marine is the lack of trained personnel to man the ships assigned to the Vietnam run. The shortage of licensed engineer officers had become so critical by December 1965 that the Secretary of Labor called a conference to consider ways in which this problem could be overcome. In January 1966 the president of the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association warned that the shortage of skilled merchant seamen was increasing. He stated that a continuation of the present program of assigning more merchant ships to the sealift to Vietnam would cause some ships to become inoperable by the midsummer of 1966.¹¹

Shipping line officials and representatives of the Maritime Administration and MSTs have been meeting periodically in an attempt to resolve some of the immediate sealift problems which affect adversely the logistics situation in South Vietnam. Regardless of any progress made toward the elimination of these short range difficulties, the long term problems, particularly ship modernization, which beset the Merchant Marine seem likely to persist pending a major revision of present government policies and programs.

There is no dearth of documentation as to the inadequacies of these programs and policies. Seldom has a single industry been examined so thoroughly by so many ad hoc and permanent groups and

¹¹George Horne, "Seaman Shortage Called Perilous," New York Times, 6 Jan. 1966, p. 46.

committees. While the doctors agree that the patient is ill, their prescriptions for remedial action differ sharply. These divergent views were surfaced most recently in conjunction with the publication, in October 1965, of an interagency task force report which suggested drastic changes in existing maritime policy and shipping laws.

Among the actions recommended were the phasing out of the U.S.-flag passenger fleet, revisions in federal subsidy procedures, and construction, under certain conditions, of American ships in foreign shipyards. The potential of this report as a basis for new merchant marine policies was diminished somewhat when the President's Maritime Policy Committee, co-chaired by the Secretaries of Labor and Commerce, unanimously declined to accept the report.¹² The Committee forwarded its own report to the President in January 1966. Both reports are presumably still under study at the highest level of government.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflection upon the foregoing strategic mobility trends leads one to the conclusion that the modernization programs implemented by the Department of Defense during the past five years have placed, for the reasons indicated earlier, a disproportionate emphasis on

¹²George Horne, "Ship Policy Study Stirs Discord," New York Times, 17 Oct. 1965, p. 88.

the qualitative and quantitative improvement of the national strategic airlift capability. No thoroughgoing attempt has been made to develop a modern sealift capability to complement the strategic aircraft procured under the comprehensive airlift modernization program initiated in 1961. As a consequence, a progressive lack of balance is emerging between the quality of the strategic airlift capacity and that of the strategic sealift fleet.

The development of the C-5A represents significant progress toward overcoming one of the primary disadvantages of present day airlift aircraft: the cargo carrying constraints imposed by their configurations and payload capacities. Aside from the modern and unique features built into the new and highly specialized amphibious and roll-on/roll-off shipping, no comparable breakthrough has been made or is in prospect with regard to two problem areas in the military sealift field: increased speed and improved cargo handling.

The current trends toward partial and sporadic sealift modernization and overall deterioration of the U.S. Merchant Marine must be reversed if we are to possess the requisite flexibility to deploy forces and equipment under the countless conditions of international crisis which could obtain during the remainder of the 1960's and 1970's. We must have both modern sealift and airlift to perform the strategic mobility tasks best suited to them. These specific actions are recommended:

1. Continued emphasis on the careful preparation, review, and correlation of strategic transportation requirements to support low or mid-intensity warfare operations. Calculations of this nature provide the data for the determination, on a recurring basis, of the quantitative and qualitative character of the strategic airlift and sealift programs. The JCS-DOD planning, programming, and budgeting process provides a framework for the accomplishment of this purpose.

2. The implementation of a long range MSTS modernization program to replace the fractional effort presently programmed. First priority should be given to the development of the new class of fast deployment logistics ships. Second and third priorities should be assigned to the procurement of new general purpose cargo ships and tankers for the MSTS nucleus fleet. All three categories of ships should be "sold" to the Congress on the basis of their military characteristics and ready availability to meet emergency requirements. Construction of new MSTS passenger ships should await final determination of the quantity needed in the nucleus fleet to complement the passenger lift contained in the projected MAC inventory.

3. The creation of a Presidential Commission to investigate the capability of the Merchant Marine to perform its dual mission of carrying U.S. commercial cargoes and serving as an auxiliary to the MSTS fleet. This approach has most recently been suggested by John D. Hayes, a retired Rear Admiral, who sees

the commission performing a task equal to that accomplished by the Morrow Commission of 1925. This group looked into the alleged neglect and incompetency of the War and Navy Department in aviation matters. Its findings and recommendations, according to Admiral Hayes, "resulted in vigorous growth for Army, Navy, and civilian aviation and prepared them for their supreme tests in the Second World War."¹³ A Presidentially appointed commission would be a more effective investigative device than a Congressional inquiry, the outcome of which could be influenced in large measure by the many interest groups involved. The commission, unencumbered by political obligations, could forward a series of objective and pertinent recommendations to the President for his consideration and eventual translation into policy and law. The members of this commission should have the stature and ability of the membership of the Draper and Clay Committees on U.S. military and economic assistance programs.

4. The continuation of the strategic airlift and amphibious shipping modernization programs. Funds for the modernization of MSTC sealift should not be diverted from these programs. The procurement of C-141's and C-5A's should be completed as scheduled or even expanded if future airlift requirements so dictate. The amphibious shipping modernization program should be continued

¹³John D. Hayes, "Our Merchant Marine in Trouble," The Reporter, Vol. 34, 13 Jan. 1966, p. 31.

until it achieves its stated goal of providing a sufficient number of new ships to lift simultaneously the assault elements of two Marine division/wing teams.

If a balanced and flexible strategic mobility posture is to be attained, there is a requirement for an organizational structure that will plan and execute strategic deployments effectively, provide a mechanism for furnishing timely and pertinent information and advice on strategic mobility matters to national decision-makers, and produce a competent and fulltime spokesman to "sell" appropriate strategic mobility programs to the executive and legislative branches of the government.

ORGANIZATION FOR STRATEGIC MOBILITY OPERATIONS

The current Department of Defense organization for the planning and execution of strategic mobility operations has evolved in the two decades since the end of World War II. Under this system the unified and specified commanders together with the individual services and transportation agencies develop the transportation plans and movement schedules to support JCS-approved plans. The Joint Chiefs of Staff periodically review transportation requirements and capabilities and, when necessary, establish priorities for the allocation of resources to the using services and commands. As DOD Single Manager Operating Agencies, MAC and MSTs provide the means for strategic airlift and sealift; the Military Traffic Management and Terminal Service (MTMTS) is responsible for the

movement of military traffic within CONUS, to include the transportation of personnel and cargo to air and sea terminals.

In commenting on the adequacy of the present organizational structure, General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the JCS said:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have and exercise the flexibility to divert our total air and sealift resources to areas where and when they are needed. I see no need for a major reorganization--only refinement and improvement of that which exists.¹⁴

General Wheeler's evaluation appears to have been borne out by the events of the past year. In fulfilling the requirement for simultaneous strategic deployments to the Dominican Republic and to South Vietnam, our strategic lift resources were taxed severely, but no evidence emerged of deficiencies in planning and control which would call for a major change in organization.

One organizational improvement which is expected to be made during the current year is the establishment of a focal point for strategic mobility within the defense establishment. A Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Strategic Mobility is to be designated. His mission will be to provide a focus for all strategic mobility matters and to furnish information and advice to the JCS and to the Secretary of Defense on all facets of strategic mobility. Taken at face value, this refinement

¹⁴Earle G. Wheeler, as quoted in "JCS Devises Combat Troop Movement Plan," The Journal of the Armed Forces, Vol. 103, 30 Oct. 1965, p. 21.

has merit. It fills an existing vacuum and reflects properly the importance of the national strategic mobility capability in the development of military strategy.

While the present strategic mobility organization supplies an effective means for the planning and conduct of strategic movements, and will soon provide, hopefully, for an active and responsive focal point for information and advice, it does not include a fulltime and responsible military spokesman to promote balanced strategic mobility programs within and without the Department of Defense. By "responsible" I mean a commander who has to contend, on a daily basis, with the problems and limitations which effect his ability to perform his assigned mission. The military heads of MAC, MSTs, and MTMTS are responsible commanders in this sense, but they represent, individually, a fragment of the strategic mobility whole. In actuality, the promotion of total strategic mobility programs falls to the JCS as a corporate body, and to the Secretary of Defense, both of whom perform this task on a part-time basis as one element of their overall responsibilities.

In developing strategic mobility programs the JCS and the Secretary of Defense rely on the diverse inputs of the services, the operational commands, and the transportation agencies. These inputs are correlated and evaluated by the Joint Staff and the DOD staff as part of the annual planning, programming, and budgeting cycle. It is in this correlation and evaluation process that the Special Assistant for Strategic Mobility has the potential for

performing an invaluable service. He can provide the expertise, objectivity, and continuing interest with respect to a balanced concept of strategic mobility that has at times been lacking at the JCS-DOD level. His effectiveness in performing this and other functions will be governed largely by the extent to which he is empowered with the essential authority and blessed with the bureaucratic skills to secure the confidence and cooperation of the senior officers of the military departments and single manager operating agencies. The soundness of the Special Assistant concept will receive its first test during the forthcoming FY 1968 planning, programming, and budgeting cycle.

Should the present organization for strategic mobility prove ineffectual in the years ahead, it can be anticipated that an attempt will be made to combine MAC, MSTS, and MTMTS into a unified mobility command under the immediate jurisdiction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Such an arrangement, its supporters contend, would have these major advantages: (1) it would provide a unity of effort missing under the current concept which calls for separate managers for the three primary forms of transportation, (2) by eliminating many of the overlapping and duplicatory functions of the single manager operating agencies it would result in greater economy and efficiency, and (3) it would facilitate strategic deployment planning by furnishing a single point of contact for the using services and commands.

To date, the studies made of the various proposals made along these lines have concluded that the creation of a strategic mobility command would result in costly requirements for new personnel and facilities and in the generation of complex budget and funding problems. The new command would not offer any important advantages over the existing organization to offset the difficulties which its establishment would propagate.

These, of course, are the traditional arguments in opposition to centralization. They were employed, without success, against the setting up of the Defense Supply Agency and the Strike Command. However, they have been decisive in relation to the determination not to restructure the strategic mobility organization. This is because they have been reinforced by the lack of readily demonstrable operational or planning defects which would justify consequential changes in the present organizational groupings.

Perhaps a rough parallel can be drawn between the establishment of a strategic mobility command and the organization of a Federal Department of Transportation recommended recently by President Johnson. Although the creation of a transportation department at the national level has been proposed in a variety of forms over a period of many years, it has never become a reality. At the present time, however, civilian transportation problems on land, sea, and air have reached proportions that demand centralization of national transportation plans, policies, and programs. For this reason, the President's proposal may be favorably received by the Congress

and enacted into law. In like fashion, future stresses and strains placed upon the organization for strategic mobility may disclose major deficiencies that will make it imperative that a mechanism be created for more and responsible direction over the strategic lift capability.

I submit that these flaws need not be restricted to planning and operational procedures. They can flourish in the area of the development and promotion of strategic mobility programs. If these programs are not balanced, if too much reliance is placed upon a single mode of transportation, if computerized data is not tempered with the seasoned judgement of fulltime practitioners of total strategic mobility, we may some day lack sufficient pliancy in our strategic lift posture to support adequately our national military strategy. Our best defense against the development of this and other adverse situations is a continuation of the present administrative practices which include periodic investigations of the suitability of the existing organizational structure for strategic mobility as well as an annual review of strategic mobility programs.

We stand on the threshold of what military historians may term the age of strategic mobility. Although we have long recognized the significance of a strategic capability to project conventional elements of national military power over long distances in short periods of time, we have only recently begun to develop that capability in a determined manner. The progress made in the past

five years toward the achievement of an acceptable strategic mobility attitude has been notable. Our future efforts must be geared not only to the pursuance of further qualitative and quantitative improvements, but to the attainment of balance and flexibility in the strategic lift inventory and to the continual shaping of a responsive and creative organization for strategic mobility.


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